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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 RPO DUBAI 000280

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SUBJECT: IRAN REGIONAL PRESENCE OFFICE DUBAI: WINDOW ON IRAN - JULY
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CLASSIFIED BY: Timothy Richardson, Acting Director, Iran
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REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (S/NF) Continuing Anger at Government, Growing Impatience with Mousavi: IRPO contacts recently returned from Iran to Dubai describe widespread frustration among the general populace and noted a sharp escalation in the anti-government rhetoric during casual conversations. The visible security presence on the streets of Tehran is significantly diminished, according to two businessmen who split their time between Dubai and Tehran. Whereas squads of uniformed security forces effectively occupied major squares and heavily patrolled key thoroughfares last week, this week their visibility has been scaled back. The businessmen said security has "gone mobile" in the form of two-person teams on motorbikes. From their office near Enghelab Square on Sunday they observed a team pass by about every ten minutes. Though the nightly calls of Allahu Akbar continue, no effective alternative to the now-suppressed street demonstrations has surfaced. These contacts say that many of their employees and associates, most of whom participated in the demonstrations, are growing disenchanted with the key opposition figures - Mousavi, Karrubi, and Khatami - for their failure to "do something," and some are openly saying that since nonviolence has failed, a revolution is required. The two contacts felt that the Iftikar protest on Thursday would not gain much traction, both because the government was prepared for unrest and because of a lack of organizational leadership.

12. (S/NF) Nourizadeh on the Election's Aftermath: UK-based broadcaster and commentator Alireza Nourizadeh told us July 5 that he remains in contact with Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi, and that their efforts to protest the election had entered a new phase. Nourizadeh, in Dubai for meetings with various sources, said more protests were being planned for July 9, around the anniversary of the student uprisings in 1999, but that the opposition would generally forego confrontations with security forces in favor of acts of civil disobedience. Mousavi, he assured us, was prepared for a long struggle and ready to put himself at risk. He noted, however, that for the immediate future, Mousavi would not venture out but that Karroubi would travel to cities outside Tehran. Nourizadeh said opposition leaders and supporters are using various means of communication, including phone and e-mail trees, to circumvent restrictions on SMS services and the internet. Nourizadeh also told us that five satellite phones had recently been smuggled into Iran. Mousavi, Karroubi, and former President Khatami each had one and more were being procured. As an aside, he noted radio

broadcasting would remain the most effective way to reach the largest portion of the Iranian public and lamented the lack of medium-wave radio broadcasts into Iran by VOA and other foreign broadcasters. Among his other points:

- Rafsanjani had secured 41 signatures from members of the Assembly of Experts but had realized he did not have sufficient support in the assembly to take action against the Supreme Leader. He had turned his attention to other avenues to support the opposition. Rafsanjani also recognized that the regime could pressure him by acting against his children and was proceeding cautiously.

- Mojtaba Khamenei was the force behind the crackdown and was adamant there could be no compromise. Others in the Supreme Leader's circle had wanted some accommodation with Mousavi and even proposed cabinet positions in the current administration for his supporters or offering Mousavi the presidency in 2013. Nourizadeh said their proposal had even been presented to Mousavi, who refused.

- Nourizadeh also told us that there were "prominent people" in Iran who may flee the country and approach US Embassies about refugee status in the US. He promised to update us with specific information if some of them decided to depart Iran.

13. (S/NF) Comment: Nourizadeh, an Iranian nationalist opposed to the regime who often notes his sensational reporting has led to regime-backed threats to his security, was insistent that the opposition was going to continue to press its case and the calm of the past few days had been a lull while it shifted tactics.

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In response to the mention of potential refugee cases, we briefly outlined the US refugee resettlement program and emphasized that the process can be a lengthy one, further complicated by conditions in the host country.

14. (S) Northern Tehranis Claim Rafsanjani Vulnerable in a New Revolution: An IRPO contact with whom we meet when he is in Dubai and his brother claimed that the Iranian public did not differentiate between Rafsanjani and the rest of the elite in its disdain for the current regime. If another revolution were to occur, our contact said, Rafsanjani would be killed along with the rest of the IRIG leadership. Our contact repeated this assertion several times, despite noting that they were eagerly watching Rafsanjani's role in the elite wrangling. The brothers were of two minds regarding the future of the government; one believes the people are afraid and will not be able to affect change while the other thought change was still possible. They agreed, however, that the protests are about gaining more freedom and not Mousavi. Comment: Their insistence that Rafsanjani faces a grim fate were another revolution to occur highlights the delicacy of Rafsanjani's position. Rafsanjani seems threatened both by other elements of the regime as well as by a popular revolt, giving him little maneuverability. This IRPO contact is generally apolitical and his views probably reflect the northern Tehran elite rather than those of politically-minded intellectuals.

15. (C) Ahmadinejad Promises "Active Role" on the World Stage: President Ahmadinejad, who has maintained an unusually low profile since the disputed June 12 election, gave a thirty-minute address on state television last night in which he

deemed the election the freest in the world and the healthiest in the Islamic Republic's 30-year history. In a nod to widespread discontent, he promised to tackle economic issues first and reduce social restrictions on youths. In a lengthy discourse on Iran's role in the world, AN refuted criticisms from his election rivals that Iran had suffered due to his mismanagement of Iran's foreign policy. Iran can not progress domestically, he argued, without a dynamic foreign policy because the Arrogant Powers of the world "do not want Iran to succeed." Comment: At times, AN's remarks were unusually conciliatory. In contrast to his press conference after the election, he did not disparage his rivals in the election or their supporters. His admission that the economy needed urgent attention is also notable, given his past bravado regarding the "successes" of his economic agenda. However, AN's accusation of foreign interference in the election and his argument for Iran's continuing "active role" in the world illustrate that while he may be softening his approach to his domestic audience, his outward belligerence will likely continue.

16. (S) Esfahan Bazaari Says Bazaar's Influence Waning: An Iranian carpet merchant who has been selling carpets for 50 years said the bazaar is no longer as cohesive a community as it used to be and blamed the government for the change. There is little connection between different bazaars, such as those in Tabriz, Tehran and Esfahan, and the connections among merchants within the bazaars are weaker too. He said the government gives preferential loans to favored merchants. The bazaari and his wife differed on the degree of support within the Esfahan bazaar for Ahmadinejad and Mousavi-she thought Mousavi had a great deal of support while he thought Ahmadinejad had strong support-but agreed that the bazaars had closed for only a few days in protest and that not all of the shops had closed. The couple made other points about life in Esfahan:

- The Iftikaf holiday is no longer widely supported; they said that in the past only Basijis and Sepahis observe the holiday. The couple then criticized the government for driving people away from religion.

- Approximately 70 to 80 percent of Esfahanis have satellite dishes and he bragged that he has three. Security forces had collected a few dishes in Esfahan but not many; the security forces were only collecting dishes from apartment buildings and

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not from private homes. Another IRPO contact in the past said the security forces also ignore satellite dishes in private homes.

17. (S) Comment: The couple was openly critical of the government throughout our conversation but without justifying or explaining their criticism. He did say that his business had been much better before the revolution and as a result seems to harbor a grievance against the current government. Although openly supportive of Mousavi, he did not seem to be tracking the political crisis very closely and did not give the impression that the bazaar was ready to stand up on behalf on Mousavi.

18. (C) Iran Still Open for Tourists: We spoke to a Dubai-based American who went to Iran as a tourist from June 18 through July 13. Our contact, a professor at a local university, told us he had seen the margins of some of the demonstrations in Tehran, getting a whiff of tear gas in the process and his companion being sternly warned about taking pictures of the Basij in the streets. Otherwise, they had no problems. Their travel between

Tehran and several other cities were not restricted, nor was their tour guide reticent in complaining about the election outcome and crackdown. Iranians he met along the way told him consistently, but only in private, the election was a farce and the heavy handed way it had been given to Ahmadinejad was an insult to the people's intelligence.

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